FUELING PROGRESSION: RED BULL AIR RACE AND AIR BP EXTEND THEIR PARTNERSHIP FOR THREE YEARS

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The collaboration between the Red Bull Air Race and Air BP that began with the 2017 season has been extended for a further three years. As official fuel and carbon reduction partner, leading international aviation fuel and services supplier Air BP provides fuel for cutting-edge raceplanes – and a great deal more. Safety, efficiency, carbon reduction and an eye to the future are all part of this unique collaboration.

With a presence in over 50 countries and more than 800 locations, Air BP is a natural fit for the Red Bull Air Race and its globe-spanning World Championship. “There’s a lot to what they’re doing and how they’re helping us,” says Red Bull Air Race Technical Manager Jim Reed.

Of course, the quality of the fuel itself is paramount. Without a high standard of fuel, race crews would struggle to find optimal engine settings. Challenger Class pilot Kevin Coleman of the USA comments, “Having high-quality, dependable fuel is key to the Red Bull Air Race. There are a million things going through a pilot’s mind on a race weekend, but when Air BP provides the fuel, I know it’s clean-running and dependable.”

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Australia’s Master Class pilot Matt Hall agrees, pointing out that fuel quality doesn’t affect

performance only. “When thinking about safety, there is one thing that might not immediately come to mind, and that is the fuel we put in the aircraft. It is a critical safety item for us to get right every single time,” he explains.

With best-in-class expertise not just in product quality and safety, but also in operations, technical design and innovation, Air BP brings more to the table as well. For instance, the Red Bull Air Race uses 8,000 to 10,000 liters of fuel for each race week (plus jet fuel for helicopters involved in production), so – especially with varying regulations for transportation of fuel worldwide – management of logistical issues is vital.

“Our race at the Lausitzring in Germany was a good example. At one point we had three airports operational simultaneously: the Race Airport at the track, another airport that was the base for the Challenger Class, and also a training airport,” Reed remembers. “Logistically that’s quite a challenge, and Air BP did an amazingly good job of getting the fuel to where we needed it, when we needed it.”

The Red Bull Air Race collaboration with Air BP begins early in the off-season. Peggy Walentin, Flight Operations Manager for the Red Bull Air Race, describes, “I look at the statistics from the previous season and discuss with Air BP how much fuel we need at each location, giving them exact GPS coordinates, while Jim tells them which day he needs the fuel. Then before each race we do a call with everyone involved: from the local Air BP teams to the responsible person at Air BP headquarters, and we discuss what we need, what they can provide and what they can bring according to local regulations. I’m impressed – they’re very professional in a very friendly way.”

In 2017, Air BP sent a team of auditors to examine the refueling process at the Red Bull Air Race, offering recommendations for improving safety and efficiency. “It was very helpful for us to see how we can improve our fueling operations even further, and I think they also learned a lot about what we require, what the racing environment means in this motorsport. They put a lot of effort into it,” Walentin remarks.

Further, Reed notes, “They also gave us ideas on better ways to test fuel to make sure that teams are abiding by the rules and not using additives.”

The mutual learning on both sides extends to a special collaboration that started outside the racetrack in 2017. The goal: to reduce carbon emissions.

“We want to play our part in creating a lower carbon future by reducing and offsetting carbon emissions, and Air BP is supporting us with their expertise,” says Walentin.

Jon Platt, Air BP’s Chief Executive Officer, says, “As well as being the global fuel partner for the Red Bull Air Race, we are also the carbon reduction partner. We’re improving fuelling efficiency for the teams at the same time as offsetting the emissions from the fuel used over the season.”

The aviation industry has ambitious carbon reduction targets and Air BP is bringing their experience and capabilities in this area to the sport. “We’re offsetting carbon emissions through environmental projects which are proven to make a difference, helping to improve livelihoods in the communities where they are based. Whether it’s forest protection in Africa, or biomass energy in China, Air BP and Red Bull Air Race are working to reduce the carbon impact of the season,” adds Platt.

Both sides are enthusiastic about the possibilities.

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“Like us, the people at Air BP are very motivated, and I think they have found in the Red Bull Air Race partnership an extra push to develop farther,” Walentin states. “We learn from each other, and we are looking towards tomorrow.”

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